



Responsive Economic Assistance to Conflict-affected Households (REACH)

Funded by USAID/ Food for Peace (FFP)

Fiscal Year 2016, Quarter 1 Report

October 1 – December 31, 2015



Cleaning of refuse site in Pantami community

Project Summary:

Award Number:

AID-FFP-G-15-00002

Start Date: October 30th, 2014

End Date: October 30th, 2015

Report Date: January 31st, 2016

Total Award: \$3,915,000

I. Program Overview

The ongoing humanitarian insecurity in northeast Nigeria caused by Boko Haram and the counter insurgency continues to create an urgent humanitarian situation in the country. According to the most recent published figures¹ 14.8 million people (out of a population of 15.2 million in the four (4) states of Borno, Yobe, Adamawa and Gombe) are affected by the crisis in the North East of Nigeria precipitated by Boko Haram violence since 2009.

The conflict has affected civilians already living in precarious conditions within the region and in particular the four most affected states have been disproportionately affected by the crisis with an estimated 7 million people including displaced, confined and hosted civilians currently in need of humanitarian assistance, with an overwhelming 3.9 million in need of food assistance from which 874,607² are in urgent need as they will be unable to meet their basic food needs.

With poor rains, lack of access to agricultural land and limited market access, food security and malnutrition are on the rise.

To address the ongoing situation of displaced and vulnerable resident households, the *Responsive Economic Assistance to Conflict-affected Households (REACH)* project continues to support food needs of both IDP and vulnerable host community members through monthly electronic voucher distributions.

II. Quarter Executive Summary

The quarter under review witnessed slight fluctuations in numbers of IDPs, though remaining well above 2.1 million,³ with 84.5% displaced due to the insurgency. An estimated 3.9 million people currently require food assistance, as measured by an IPC level of 3 or higher.

In addition, there is continued concern about protection risks and human rights violations, impacting the most vulnerable civilian populations in particular. Women and children (respectively constituting 54% and 56% of the overall population), remain the most vulnerable to food insecurity and malnutrition with a high number of pregnant and lactating women requiring special nutritional support.

Sixty percent of households assessed listed food as their main priority need.⁴ With reduced production levels and households stocks, 74% of people are relying largely on markets to meet their food needs, where food prices are relatively high as most food comes from other states through long, bad, unsafe roads. Market access is restricted as Boko Haram often uses them as soft targets. Ten percent of the assessed households had Household Dietary Diversity Scores (HDDS) at critical food security level, while 18% were at crisis level. Over 70% of the households assessed had resorted to some severe coping strategies such as borrowing to purchase food. Food insecurity may worsen further with late planting and an expected early end to the rains, and the continuing high food prices.

Mercy Corps continues to deliver assistance as funded by the original REACH, and subsequent extension.

¹ 2016 Humanitarian Needs Overview (HNO) for Nigeria

² Cadre Harmonise 2016

³ IOM Round VII Displacement Tracking Matrix Report for December 2015

⁴ Food security and livelihoods assessment in North East Nigeria FAO, August 2015.

III. Security Context, Situation Overview and Operational Summary

Security:

In the previous quarter, Gombe State witnessed consecutive suicide bombings resulting in a high number of casualties and subsequent limitation in movement. In response, Mercy Corps reviewed its security protocols to ensure the safety of its staff and assets, and activities continued. The quarter under review proved to be calm with no incidents to report in Gombe State. However, Abuja was targeted on two separate occasions during the month of October 2015 with suicide bombings allegedly perpetrated by Boko Haram raising the spotlight on their presence and reach beyond the North East area.

Meanwhile, porous borders, insecurity in neighboring countries, growing extremism and forced displacement in the Lake Chad Basin add a regional dimension to the present humanitarian crisis and security situation which needs to be monitored closely to adapt operational measures necessary to ensure safety of beneficiaries and resources.

In addition, host community household and community resources have been exhausted, which are causing fatigue on the part of the host communities and, if not addressed, could create difficulties between displaced people and host communities.

Population movements:

Some movement was recorded within the quarter in Gombe State and further investigation resulted in the understanding that it mainly involved male heads of household. Their movements were an attempt to acquire livelihood opportunities outside Gombe, leaving behind the women and children to fend for themselves. They cite relative peace in Gombe as a reason for leaving their family while they go in search of alternative livelihood in other towns. However that movement was not sustained and the majority were returning back to their location of displacement.

Markets:

Most markets in the Northeast remain closed or with minimal or restricted trade activities. Retail prices of staples for the area are higher than markets in other states. Generally, markets are functioning below normal and suicide bomb attacks on market spaces inhibit free trading and affect household income generating activities, including petty trading which is important during the lean periods. In addition, food prices are relatively high, limiting access and increasing the burden on households. Agricultural production in the last two seasons, including the dry-season production, was well below average, reducing food availability, and thus increasing the length of the lean season.

Operations: The quarter under review was focused primarily on building the capacity of human resources and the operationalization of working protocols in the newly accessed areas of operation. Mercy Corps also expanded its physical presence to Adamawa State with an ECHO-funded program targeting needs of IDPs and host community members with unconditional cash transfers, WASH and protection interventions.

Additionally, part of its humanitarian strategy for North East Nigeria and in an effort to respond strategically to the needs of resident populations, Mercy Corps conducted two needs assessment missions to South Borno State, specifically the LGAs of Biu, Hawul and Kwaya Kusar. Preliminary findings showed enormous priority needs for over 46,000 IDPs and host community members who to date have not been reached by assistance. Mercy Corps plans to expand its operations to South Borno as funding opportunities are made available with programs in the pipeline to provide immediate food assistance, support for emergency relief items, protection support and WASH interventions.

Humanitarian Coordination: Mercy Corps continues to maintain an active role and contributes to all humanitarian coordination groups. At the Abuja level, ongoing participation within the sector working groups, HCT (*Humanitarian Country Team*) and INGO forum ensures collaboration at all levels with all stakeholders. At the state level, Mercy Corps continues to maintain bilateral relations with relevant parties and ensures participation in state working groups. Coordination with both SEMA (*State Emergency Management Agency*) and NEMA (*National Emergency Management Agency*) in Gombe and Adamawa as well as various LGA heads of office and other relevant stakeholders occurs through monthly reports following the signature of a memorandum of understanding with the State.

Mercy Corps also helped facilitate and host a visit from US officials, namely representative of OFDA and the Office of Food for Peace (FFP) in early December for three days. The visit included an overview and presentation of Mercy Corps' activities as well as site visits to meet and discuss with beneficiaries.

Mercy Corps also participated fully in the HNO/HRP process that took place with HCT leadership in Abuja and ensured that emphasis on needs as reported by the affected population were prioritized and included in round table discussions.

Staff Development: Staff members of the humanitarian team attended the following trainings and workshops.

- On protection: A training on case management and working with survivors of sexual violence organized by the International Rescue Committee in Adamawa.
- On humanitarian response: The Director of Humanitarian Programs attended a workshop at Mercy Corps' headquarters on Emergency Response and co-facilitated a session on Humanitarian Impact and Learning.

IV. Project Performance

Unconditional Cash Vouchers

OBJECTIVE 1.1: 4,100 IDP and host households purchase nutritious food that meets the needs of all household members including women, adolescent girls and young children, using food vouchers			
INDICATORS	TARGET	PROGRESS (Q1)	COMPLETION
Indicator 1.1a: # of recipients targeted and reached (disaggregated by sex and age: 6-23 months, 23-59 months, 5-18 years, and ≥18 years of age)	Households: 4,100 Individuals: 28,700	Households: 4,269 Individuals: 29,883	100%
Indicator 1.1b Actual cost per beneficiary sub-sectors activities	9,600NGN \$60	9,600NGN \$48	100%
Main activities planned for Quarter 5	Progress during reporting period		
<i>Food assistance</i> ❖ Monthly transfer to e- cards	❖ 3 rounds of monthly transfers completed		
<i>Vouchers for work (VFW)</i> ❖ Continuation of beneficiaries registration, validation and final selection	❖ Final beneficiaries registration, validation and selection completed		
❖ Implementation of projects in the	❖ Community sanitation exercise conducted in 10		

communities	communities of intervention <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Rural road rehabilitation, drainage and latrine construction completed in 5 communities ❖ Conducted distribution of waste containers in 4 communities ❖ Construction of chairs for schools completed in 5 communities. ❖ Construction of well, reservoir and incinerator completed in 3 communities.
<i>Nutrition</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Continue advocacy to UNICEF and state for provision of services to CMAM centers and identified cases. ❖ Continued awareness raising with mother support groups 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Advocacy and linkage creation with UNICEF and State towards sustainability ongoing ❖ Facilitated referral of 5 malnourished children to CMAM centers

Food assistance

As noted in the previous quarter, a no-cost extension was requested and granted allowing for the disbursement of an additional two months of food voucher top-ups to the 4,100 targeted households.

During the months of October through December, three rounds of food top-ups to the electronic vouchers were processed. A review of the platform indicated that out of the original 464 beneficiaries that were targeted only 132 remain active.

The table below illustrates the total target reached with the allocation of number of rounds.

Rounds received up till 9.30.15	# of HH reached	October Distribution	# of HH active Oct-15	November Distribution	December Distribution	# Bal.
5 rounds	1,046	1	1,046	1	1	3
6 rounds	337	1	337	1	1	3
7 rounds	2,422	1	2,422	1	1	2
8 rounds	464	0	132	1	1	1
Grand Total	4,269	3,805	3,937	3,937	3,937	3,937

Voucher for Work

The previous quarterly report outlined the registration process, vulnerability targeting criteria, final selection of beneficiary lists, approval of community projects and procurement of necessary materials and tools. The first community project of planting 1,200 trees across 12 communities was also completed.

During the period reported, the implementation of 29 selected projects progressed with high involvement from both IDP and host communities. The projects identified by the communities aimed both at restoring assets for the community and building a sense of engagement between both communities in the crisis. A total of 29 individual projects were implemented across all 12

communities engaging a total of 376 laborers (301 unskilled / 75 skilled) over an average of 10 half labor days).

Below are details of individual projects carried out in different communities.

- *Community Cleaning and Sanitation*

A community sanitation campaign was conducted as part of the cash-for-work activities across 11 communities (Tunfure, Bolari, Kuri, Jekadafari, Dadin Kowa, Nassarawo, Kagarawal, Deba, Mallam Inna and Pantami). These communities had earlier identified environmental degradation and inappropriate environmental hygiene practices as a major challenge. With overcrowding and inadequate waste disposal structures it was becoming increasingly difficult for the public areas and streets to maintain an appropriate level of hygiene.

The project provided for basic cleaning tools such as rakes, shovels and brooms for a cleaning and sanitation campaign in the main streets and dump sites. Empty plots of land were identified to serve as refuse disposal sites within the communities. The cleaning and sanitation exercise was accompanied with hygiene messages aiming at behavioral change towards environmental hygiene and proper refuse disposal.

- *Rural Road Rehabilitation*

With many of the connecting roads eroded by the effect of rain water and floods, movement is additionally restricted especially during the rainy season. In the communities of Pantami and Tunfure, rehabilitation of two main roads was carried out. Tools were distributed for the construction of a passage allowing community members to cross between locations.

- *Construction and rehabilitation of drainage systems, latrines, refuse dump sites and water reservoir.*

A water drainage system was rehabilitated in Dadin Kowa community to reduce the impact of water pollution and mitigate the effects of the floods that have eroded some roads leading to the community.

Refuse dump collectors were also constructed in three communities of Federal Low Cost, Jekadafari and Tumfure. The community donated a piece of land used for building the refuse site.

Support was provided to Maikaho, and Dadin Kowa communities to build public latrines. These were specifically intended to support the communities in inducing behaviour change where open defecation has been a major problem and reducing water borne diseases.

A water reservoir was also erected at Pantami community servicing the maternity clinic.

- *Construction of School Chairs and Well*

Five communities identified the need for school chairs and tables namely Bolari, Nassarawo, Deba, Jekadafari and Kuri. Local artisans were engaged to build forty five sets of chairs and tables which were donated to the primary schools serving 225 girls who before that were sitting on the floor for their lessons.

Digging of a well was completed in Kuri community as a response to water scarcity and is currently serving about 400 households both host and IDP.

Provision of Waste Containers

Forty waste containers were procured and delivered to the communities of Malam Inna, Tunfure, Federal Low Cost and Nassarawo to ensure proper waste disposal and a healthier environment.

Nutrition and Hygiene

Hygiene awareness and nutrition messaging continued to be delivered alongside the food assistance activities through the established twenty mother support groups in the twelve intervention communities.

- *Continued Advocacy and Linkage Creation*

Advocacy efforts towards UNICEF and the state authorities are ongoing through direct coordination with the primary health care unit. The aim is to leverage previous efforts for the State to respond effectively to the treatment of severely malnourished children identified in all communities of intervention.

Linkages through the mother support groups and community volunteers play an important role in delivering messages and providing referral network for CMAM cases.

- *Identification of SAM Children and Referral*

The formation of the mother support groups in the communities is providing a good platform for continued sensitization on adequate feeding and choice of quality food consumption for households across all communities of intervention. Five severely malnourished children were identified in Makaiho community and were referred to Nassarawo hospital for treatment.

V. Monitoring and Evaluation

M&E activities conducted include post-distribution monitoring, market transaction monitoring, price survey monitoring, and cash for work monitoring and complaints and feedback loop.

The table below illustrates the number of monitoring activities conducted in the quarter under review.

	Monitoring Activity	# of monitoring interventions	% of total benef served in Q4
1	Post-Distribution Monitoring	242	13.0%
2	Market Transaction Monitoring	62	51%
3	Price Surveys	8	N/A
4	Voucher for Work	14	N/A

- *Post Distribution Monitoring*

Post distribution monitoring activities was conducted across all communities of intervention in order to ascertain the impact of the project on beneficiaries and to ensure effective utilization of intervention provided. Monitoring activities were conducted door to door in order to effectively ascertain impact and collect adequate information on existing needs through interaction or observations. Outcomes from the post-distribution monitoring indicates that 85% of the beneficiaries have improved on quality of food consumption because all the classes of food needed for balanced diet were purchased which could be attributed to the active nutrition sensitization in the community. The result of the analysis also shows that 36% of the beneficiaries are still in need of livelihood assistance.

- *Market Transaction Monitoring*

Intensive monitoring activities are always conducted at each voucher redemption point, so as to ensure vendors' compliance with all agreements entered into with Mercy Corps with respect to the quality of

goods sold to beneficiaries, non-exploitation of beneficiaries and not exchanging of voucher for cash. Market transaction monitoring ensures accountability and transparency in project implementation.

- *Price Surveys*

As a standard Mercy Corps conduct, price surveys of food items in the market and within the communities of intervention are carried out on a monthly basis in order to ascertain the appropriate value of vouchers provided to the beneficiaries to meet their needs. For the quarter in review, prices of food items in the market have remained very unstable, especially for importing communities where the price keeps fluctuating. Analysis from the surveys shows that the prices of food items increased in the month of October and then drop towards the end of the month. Prices did, however, increase in mid-November to December; this could be attributed to the festive periods.

- *Cash for Work Monitoring*

Monitoring activities were conducted for voucher-for-work across all the communities of intervention. This was done to ensure quality of work done and provide support and supervision for the beneficiaries in the communities. As part of an effort to ensure sustainability, monitoring of trees planted was intensively conducted. This monitoring will help ensure the community is committed to sustaining the trees planted and that they are adequately taking care of all the projects.

The outcome of the monitoring activities indicates that the community stakeholders are happy with all projects implemented and feel that they have helped meet their needs, a result of the fact that they were able to choose the activities conducted.

- *Community Complaints and Feedback Mechanism*

The community feedback mechanism carried out through the use of the hotline, resulted in the compilation of categories of feedback including, but not limited to, technical issues arising from the use of the e-vouchers and electronic platform as well as requests for assistance beyond or in addition to food security. A total of 52 feedback communications were received for the quarter under review; Mercy Corps effectively addressed technical issues around electronic beneficiary cards. Community appreciation of the assistance provided, as well as methodology is also gathered through the feedback mechanism.

V. Security

In response to the security context described above, Mercy Corps' security protocols are constantly revised to update risks and mitigating measures. During the quarter under review, an updated version of the Mercy Corps Nigeria security plan was produced and finalized.

V1.Challenges

Generally, while the overall program implementation is on track and within target, a few challenges are encountered. The challenges include:

- Certain expectations from host community members to receive additional assistance in proportion to the assistance being provided to IDPs. Recognition of the exhaustion of resources within the host communities and the understanding of the need for taking a "Do No Harm" approach is guiding Mercy Corps' review and redesign of the activities to fold in host community members as a key target for sustainability and acceptance.
- The ongoing lack of adequate IDP tracking in the humanitarian community in Nigeria creates difficulties in reporting accurate numbers and movement trends and presents a challenge in terms of advocacy for additional assistance to meet immediate needs.
- Weak and decentralized coordination efforts on the national and state levels produces a gap in the ability to share reliable information which defines needs, gaps and response.

VII. Plans for next quarter

Activity	Main activities
Food Assistance	➤ Continued monthly food voucher assistance to beneficiaries
Vouchers for Work	➤ Handover of all projects to the community and state review of suggested community projects for additional cash for work activities
Nutrition and Hygiene	➤ Coordination and advocacy for referral pathway
M &E	➤ Project sustainability and exit meetings with communities ➤ End of project monitoring ➤ Project end line evaluation ➤ End of project report